

SNAPS

A COMIC WEEKLY OF COMIC STORIES BY COMIC AUTHORS.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 12.

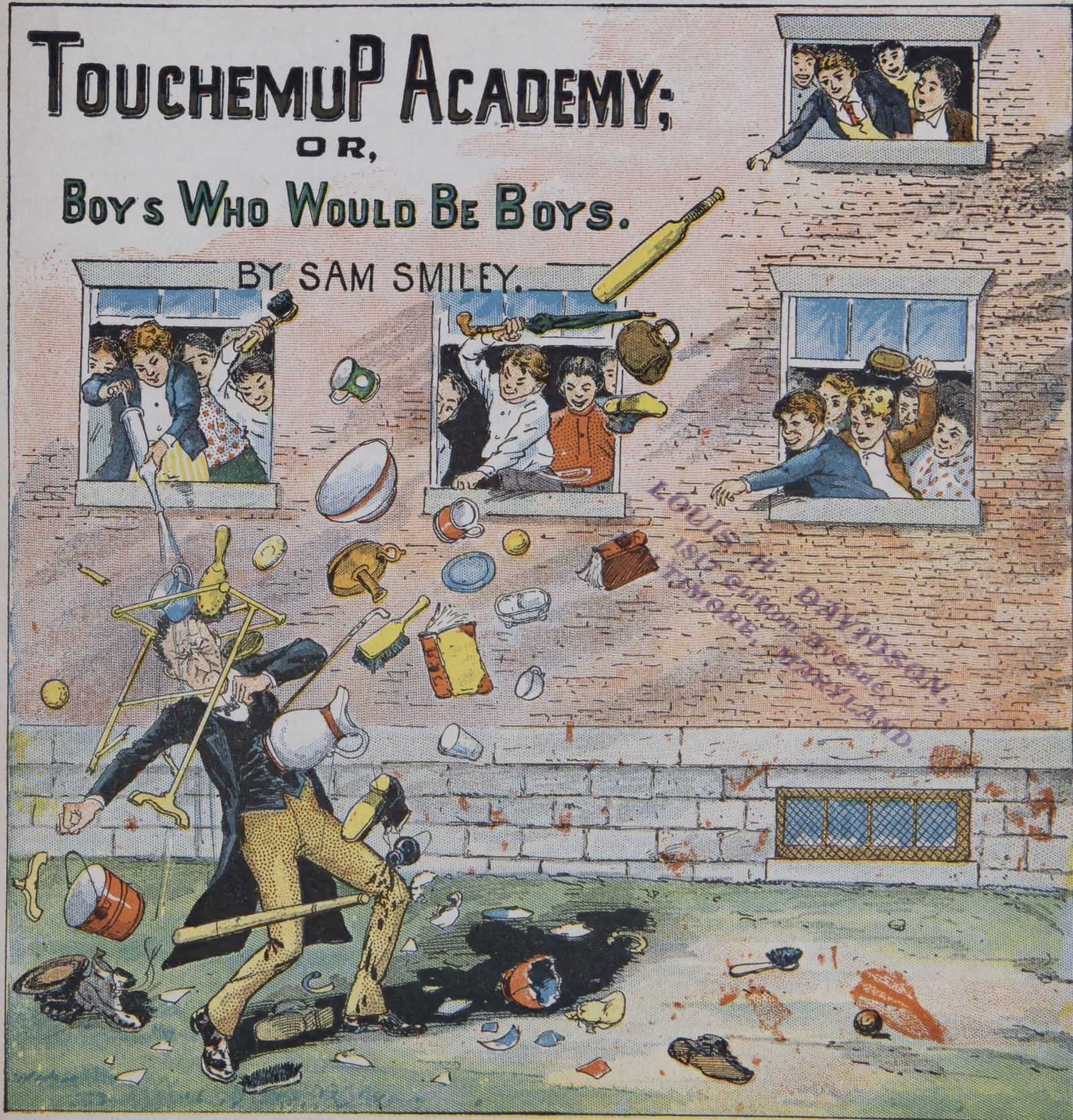
NEW YORK, DECEMBER 27, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

TOUCHEMUP ACADEMY; OR,

BOYS WHO WOULD BE BOYS.

BY SAM SMILEY.



Bings was frantic. Pelted all over, he vainly strove to dodge the missiles. Biff! came a wash basin down on his nose. Plunk! went a slop pail upon his cocoanut. Bang! came a towel rack on his neck.

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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A Comic Weekly of Comic Stories by Comic Authors.

*Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, October 9, 1899.
Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1899, in the office of the Librarian of Congress,
Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.*

No. 12.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 27, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.

Touchemup Academy;

OR,

Boys Who Would Be Boys.

BY SAM SMILEY.

LOUIS H. DAVIDSON,
1817 Clifton Avenue,
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND.

CHAPTER I.

On a bright, sunny afternoon in September, a train of cars came to a pause at the pretty railroad depot of Glenwood, on the Sound side of Long Island, and a gentleman and his only son alighted.

The boy was about seventeen years of age and had rosy cheeks, mild blue eyes, an angelic expression, and wore a new black suit and a derby hat.

He carried a valise ten sizes too big and heavy for his strength.

His father merely carried a scowl on his face.

As he did not even wish to carry as much as that he bestowed it upon his son.

This gentleman was a New York merchant and his name was John Thomas Page.

The boy answered to the name of Frank Page.

Beside the depot there stood a ramshackle carriage to which was hitched a weather-beaten old gray plug with a stumpy tail and a spavin.

Within the vehicle sat two men eagerly watching the man and the boy.

The most prominent of the pair was a tall, thin individual attired in a clerical suit of sombre black, a cut-throat collar, a plug hat, and a grim look which clearly indicated a cold, cruel and mean disposition.

He had a narrow, clean-shaven face, a long, sanctimonious nose, a pair of scrubbing-brush eyebrows and not many teeth to blow about.

Jeremiah Bings was his signature.

He was the chief cook and bottle washer of Touchemup

Academy, a reformatory school for boys, located some distance away from there.

His companion was the hired man of all work at the delectable school, and registered to vote as Sylvester O'Hara.

To all appearance O'Hara was a very stupid, yet good-natured Irishman, with a little pug nose, an awful big mouth, little twinkling eyes, and bristly red whiskers under his neck, like a turkey.

He wore a dilapidated felt hat much too small for him, a red flannel shirt cut low in the neck, a pair of pants whose glory had departed, and he daintily carried a clay pipe between his first and second fingers with the grace of a dude smoking a cigarette.

Mr. Page and his son had hardly reached the platform when the professor alighted from his carriage, assumed a most benevolent grin, and, hastening up to the pair with outstretched hands, he cried in sweet tones:

"This is Mr. Thomas Page, I presume?"

"Exactly so, sir," replied the merchant, pausing and eying him keenly.

"My name is Bings—Jeremiah Christopher Bings."

"Ah! Glad to meet you, sir," said Mr. Page, shaking hands with him.

"I received your letter," said the school teacher blithely, "in which you stated that you have a son who is a little inclined to be refractory that you wish to leave for one quarter on trial at my academy."

"Yes, I am the unhappy father of the worst imp of mischief who ever escaped the gallows," mournfully said Mr. Page. "My wife and I can do nothing with him, and if you can you will receive our everlasting blessings."

"And is this the little chap?" asked Bings, beaming upon Frank kindly.

"This is the scoundrel, sir, and you may form an idea of his disposition when I inform you, sir, that he dropped a handful of pins down the back of my neck in the car while I was dozing. As the pins began to scratch I awakened, sir, and tried to get rid of them, but, as the car was full of people, modesty prevented me from taking off my underclothes to get them out. Consequently I suffered untold tortures, and, to wind it up, the young imp blamed it upon the man back of me, and I pulled the gentleman's nose. We had a fight, of course, and the rest of the passengers then told me that they saw my son do it, and I had to apologize on the spot or have my neck broken."

"Really, it was dreadful!" gasped the professor. "But, as I have my school filled with just such boys, whom I have tamed by my methods of subjection, you may rely upon me to graduate your son as gentle and as inoffensive as a lamb. Come here, my little man, and let me get better acquainted with you."

He held out his hand to Frank, and the little fellow smiled up at him with a kind, affectionate look, and, dropping the heavy valise on Bings' bunion, he clasped his hand and said:

"I am glad to meet you, sir."

"Holy gosh dang it!" yelled the professor wildly.

He wrenched his hand away, his hat flew off his head, and, fairly blue in the face with pain, he hoisted his injured bunion, grabbed it with both hands and shot up in the air.

Both Frank and his father recoiled from the professor with looks of intense astonishment upon their faces, and the boy screamed:

"Run, pop; he's got bugs."

"Dear me! can the man be looney?" gasped Mr. Page.

"Fire and brimstone, you have murdered me!" howled Bings furiously.

"Why, what ails you, sir?" asked the boy in surprised tones.

"My foot—you dropped your bag on it."

"Oh!" muttered Mr. Page as the truth dawned upon his mind.

"I beg your pardon, sir," politely said the boy with a very meek look.

The professor cooled off as the pain subsided, and, glaring balefully at the boy, he rushed up to him, shook his clenched fist under his nose, and, gnashing his gums, he hissed, furiously:

"You little, ill-bred puppy, I'll smash every bone in your body if——"

"The deuce you will!" roared Mr. Page, bridling up with parental pride. "You old buck-toothed rooster, if you dare

to lay a hand on my boy or reflect on his family I'll break your face."

He waltzed up to the professor and squared off at him so fiercely that Bings was appalled, held up his hands and recoiled.

"Mercy!" gasped he. "I did not mean anything, my dear sir. Really, it was only a demonstration of the—ah—the manner in which I subjugate the unruly actions of the—ah—the young gentleman, whose flow of animal spirits overcomes the bounds of discretion."

"Oh!" said Mr. Page. "As long as no reflection was cast on me——"

"None at all, none whatever," hastily asserted Bings in fervent tones.

"Then shake. Of course a father hates to see a strange man whang the deuce out of his boy right under his very nose. But if the little villain does anything wrong at school you, of course, have my free consent to lambaste the dickens out of him in regulation style. Now, if you will let me have the particulars about your school, I'll leave Frank here with you and take this train back to the city, return to business, and you can take the young scalawag on to the school in your carriage."

"Why, certainly, certainly," smiled the professor, pump-handling the merchant's hand fervently. "You see, my academy is one of the most successful establishments in the country for the education and reform of intractable boys, and my methods combine the sternest discipline with all the comforts of home and kindness of love."

The professor then began to spout about his academy.

According to the reputation he gave it, a bad boy had only to pass within its portals when he was suddenly transformed into a religious little prude who wouldn't knock down a cent from his Sunday-school money in order to buy taffy.

Mr. Page became so interested that he sat down on a depot bench with Bings, with the bag at his feet, while waiting for his train to take him away, and swallowed the professor's lies with an eager hope of total reform in his boy.

Frank stood by as quietly as a kitten and took it all in.

He realized that the boys of Touchemup Academy were dandies—probably the worst, most incorrigible terrors in existence, who were so full of the devil that it was impossible to knock it out of them.

That just suited Frank Page.

He was one of them, heart, body and soul.

To get in with a gang of kindred spirits—boys who were so chock full of fun that they couldn't get any more in—was just what he wanted.

Sorrowful as his coming here was in the beginning, it now

began to look as if his respected father could not have done him a greater service.

Frank Page was city born and bred, and he was so mischievous that he was bounced from every school he went to.

At home he carried on his practical jokes to such an extent that he became unbearable to his parents, and hence they resolved rather than put him in prison to send him to the private reform school.

To insure him getting there his father had personally brought him as far as he had gone, and the old man was so well pleased with all that Prof. Bings told him that he resolved to let the boy stay there a year.

Upon observing that his doom was sealed, Frank strolled around the end of the depot, leaving his father talking terms to the professor, and, pausing close to Sylvester O'Hara, he remarked pleasantly:

"I am the new scholar."

"God help yer, then," replied the handy man, with a grin.

"Pretty tough school, isn't it?" queried Frank, curiously.

"Be heavens, purgatory is a paradise compared wid it."

"Ain't the fellows there good ones?"

"I'll be sorry fer ther government whin they escape from the school."

"Why so?"

"Bekase it will have to go to the expinse of hangin' thim."

"How far is the school from here?"

"Three moiles."

Frank nodded and walked back to where he had left his father sitting, but he got there too late to see them.

They had taken advantage of his absence to skip across the tracks into a beer saloon, and the boy just caught a glimpse of their coat tails disappearing behind the green swinging doors.

O'Hara had not seen them on account of the angle of the depot hiding the saloon from his view.

A bland smile crossed Frank's face, he straightened up with an air of importance, and, striding back to the carriage in a brisk and business-like fashion, he said in consequential tones as he got in:

"Drive ahead."

"Dhroive ahead?" echoed O'Hara, with a puzzled look.

"Yep!" unconcernedly replied the boy.

"Where to?"

"Back to the school, of course."

"But, begorra, ther professor's goin' wid us."

"Oh, no, he isn't! I left him with pop. This carriage ain't big enough for the four of us, so they are going to hoof it."

"Where is Mr. Bings?"

"Why," laughed the boy, winking at his perplexed com-

panion, "didn't you see them sneak into the saloon across the tracks?"

"No. But, bedad, it's meself they moight have give an invitation."

"Hush! Don't you understand the lay? They don't want us to see them drinking. That's why they told me to drive ahead, I suppose."

"Ha, ha," chuckled O'Hara, with a broad grin and a wink at Frank.

Then they both laughed merrily.

"You have got quite a trotter here," said Frank, pointing at the mare.

"Shure, she can bate a locomotive," asserted O'Hara, in tones of pride, for horses were his hobby and he always gassed about them.

"Then let the old hatrack out, as the professor ain't looking," suggested Frank, "and if she makes a mile in ten minutes I'll treat you."

O'Hara started the old skate along the country road just as the locomotive whistle blew, causing Mr. Page and the professor to rush out of the saloon.

Away flew the horse, with O'Hara thumping it with a whip, off started the train, on which Mr. Page had just time to leap, and a moment later the professor appeared, lugging Frank's heavy valise.

The moment he saw the horse and carriage flying along the dusty road toward the school a roar escaped him, and he went rushing after it, staggering under the weight of the valise, yelling:

"Hey, O'Hara! Come back! Come back! You've left me behind!"

But the man failed to hear him, as he was too far away, and Frank's little joke caused Bings to tramp all the way back to the school, carrying the heavy valise, and swearing vengeance every step he took, now that the boy was at his mercy.

CHAPTER II.

Upon arriving at Touchemup Academy our hero was somewhat surprised to see a row of boys' heads along the top of the fence that lined the road leading up to the old-fashioned, rambling building.

Nothing more than these heads, adorned by all kinds of mischievous faces and different kinds of hats, could be seen, and as the rattling old buggy drew nearer to them they suddenly dodged down out of sight again.

Unfortunately for Frank, he made no remark to his com-

panion about them, as he realized that they must have been some of Mr. Bings' scholars.

But as the carriage was passing the fence a shower of missiles suddenly flew over it, in the form of empty fruit cans, sods, eggs, vegetables and other refuse, which landed all over the equipage.

Bombarded by this furious fusillade, the boy and his companion gave a yell and tried to dodge, but failed to escape.

A carrot caught Frank in the ear.

Then a tomato can thumped him on the back.

Next an old shoe gave him a swat on the neck.

O'Hara was nearest to the fence, and, as the shower continued to pour over upon them, he became the recipient of sundry eggs of doubtful age, the carcass of a dead cat, and half a brick took off his hat.

A large portion landed on the mare and she cocked back her ears, reared up her stumpy tail, and with a violent snort she plunged ahead.

"Howly poker!" gasped O'Hara, "it's thim bloody byes!"

"Go like blazes! Here comes another shower!" cried Frank.

"Git up, ye spalpeen!" howled O'Hara as he hammered the old plug.

"What boys are they?" panted Frank as they got out of range.

"Some av ther schollys."

"By ginger, they're thoroughbreds."

Although Frank did not enjoy his reception, it gave him a pretty good idea of the kind of fellows he would be thrown in with.

O'Hara left him on the piazza and drove away to the barn.

The boy had closely questioned him during the ride about the school, and he therefore had a fair idea of the place before he got there.

He had not been on the piazza long when a string of boys about his own age came along in single file, and, pausing in front of the boy, they glanced up at him, when he saw that they were the same ones who had been behind the fence.

"He's the new scholar, fellers!" exclaimed one of them.

Then the rest began, each in time, to criticise Frank.

"Ain't he a coffee-cooler?"

"Stag the new clothes!"

"Regular la-la!"

"Say, chappie, what ship brought you over?"

"It looks like mamma's boy, don't it?"

"Nearest to what is it."

These and a regular volley of similar remarks ran along the line.

Frank did not lose his temper, but, calmly surveying the crowd, he made a gesture of compassion and remarked, pityingly:

"Poor fellows. I know you are all crazy. I feel sorry for you. All so young and handsome, too. It's a shame. Now, run along, like good little boys. Return to your cage. You have acted real nice for to-day. I'll ask the professor to give you each a sugar plum for your sweet behavior. Go ahead, my good little boys."

The gang began to look sheepish.

Had Frank answered them in the same spirit they were in, he would have received an unmerciful guying.

But he placed them at a loss how to reply, and as one of the under teachers came out, they slunk away without uttering a word.

The teacher was a skinny little man with a bald head and a sickly little fringe of whiskers on each side of his consumptive face, and he was known as Archibaldas Holden, the professor of languages.

He questioned Frank and conducted him into the dingy parlor, where he kept the boy in conversation for half an hour, explaining the routine of the school, when suddenly there came a furious racket outside, a door was violently banged and the next moment the voice of Prof. Bings was heard, roaring wildly:

"By thunder, where is that young whelp? I'll teach him to run away with my horse and carriage. He'll pay for making me walk all the way here from the station with this heavy bag! I'll——"

Just then he entered the parlor and saw Frank calmly smiling, and, covered with dust, sweating from his exertions, and madder than a hornet, he dropped the valise and made a rush for the boy.

Frank had his eye on Bings.

So had Archibaldas Holden, and he fled from the room in alarm.

The boy and the professor therefore had the room all to themselves.

As Bings rushed for Frank, Frank rushed for Bings.

Down crouched the boy, and the moment they met he shot between the infuriated professor's long legs, almost upsetting him, and Bings landed head first into the arms of a big old-fashioned rocking chair.

"Lord!" panted the boy as he turned around and looked at the professor driving the chair across the room with his head. "I'm in for it now."

Bings was raving like a lunatic.

Recovering himself, he glared at the boy a moment, too wrathful to find utterance beyond a prolonged stammer.

By the time he regained control of his speech, the first intensity of his rage melted away, and with a dark scowl he yelled:

"Page, come here!"

"What for, sir?"

"I am going to give you a licking."

"Then I won't go near you, sir."

"You young hound, do you realize what you have done?"

"Certainly I do, sir."

"Then ain't you ashamed of yourself?"

"No, sir."

"You made me walk all the way home with your valise."

"I know it, sir."

"Confound your impudence, do you expect me to stand that?"

"Yes, sir."

For a moment the professor's rage arose again and he was about to burst into a terrible tirade of abuse against the boy when a big, fat wench appeared in the doorway with a scared look on her face.

Her name was Dinah Jackson, and she was the professor's cook.

"Oh, Lawd, Massa Bings," she roared in a voice like a man's, "de kitching chimbley am afire, sah, an' de whole house done git bu'ned up, fo' shuah, if yo doan' do somefing ter put it out."

Alarm drove all resentment from Bings' mind and he shouted:

"Page, go to your room and put away your clothes!"

He then dashed out of the room after Mrs. Jackson.

Frank breathed a deep sigh of intense relief.

He had been expecting to get a thrashing.

"It's lucky for me the old flue caught afire," he muttered as he left the room. "If it hadn't he would have warmed my jacket."

He met Archibaldas Holden in the hall, and, picking up his valise, he went upstairs with the teacher and was assigned to a cot in a big dormitory and given a chest of drawers for his clothes.

Here Mr. Holden left him.

Frank packed away his effects.

He then strolled around the building inspecting it.

Touchemup Academy was a bleak and cheerless place.

It was old, worn out, dusty and comfortless.

The boy saw this much, and, not very favorably impressed with the house, he went downstairs and examined the grounds.

A broad campus in back stretched away to the shore of the Sound, where there stood several buildings; at one side of the school house was the barn, and the academy stood in the midst of a grove of trees.

Most of the boys were playing a game of ball on the green, and as Frank joined them he learned that they had discovered the trick he played upon the professor.

It tickled them immensely and they regarded him with more favor than they had done before.

"You'll catch rats for doing the professor," said one of them, known as Skinny Muggins, to Frank. "He's a spiteful old wretch and he starves and beats us every chance he gets. The best way is to leave him alone."

"He locked me in the cellar for two days last week," added a boy called Butsey Bluffer, who was known to be the worst liar in the school, "and he didn't give me anything to eat or drink all the time I was there, just because I put some kerosene in the teapot when Dinah wasn't looking."

Frank was invited to go into the game.

He accepted.

Unfortunately.

They had a job put up on him.

Before the supper bell rang he was laid out.

His legs were kicked black and blue, he had a black eye, his coat was ripped up the back, and he had the appearance of having had a house fall on him.

When he saw that none of the rest had suffered such treatment he tumbled to the fact that they were making a butt of him for their jokes, but he did not utter a word of complaint.

Oh, no.

He was too foxy.

But he kept up a tall lot of thinking.

"They are a gang of hazers," he cogitated, as he went toward the school house with them. "To-night they'll tackle me again, I suppose. But I'll get even. They'll find that Frank Page isn't such a chump as they think he is. I'll boss this gang or bust!"

The professor had extinguished the fire in the chimney for the cook, burnt his fingers, scalded his nose and covered himself with soot and it left him in a terrible temper.

As soon as he saw Frank he grabbed him by the neck, ran him into his study, grasped a rattan and roared:

"What do you mean by this disgraceful appearance, sir?"

"Hold on! Don't hit me, sir. I'm nearly dead," pleaded the boy.

A look of grim satisfaction spread over the face of Bings.

"I'm glad of it!" he yelled. "Who did this?"

"The boys."

"What! The ruffians! I'll put them down for this. Still, I'm glad of it, too. They have done for me what I intended doing to you this afternoon."

"This isn't the worst of it," said Frank with a sigh. "I wouldn't mind what they did to me so much as I did to hear them slander you, sir."

"Me? Fire and brimstone! Did they say anything about me?"

"Called you all sorts of terrible names."

"I'll fix them for this!"

"And there's a plot against you for to-night, sir."

Mr. Bings released Frank, laid down his rattan, closed the door, and, with a savage look upon his face, he demanded:

"What was this plot?"

"I don't like to tell you, sir."

"Speak out, or I'll lather you!"

"But if they find it out——"

"Don't you be afraid, Page—I will protect you."

"Well," reluctantly said Frank in low tones, "they said they were going to get up about twelve o'clock and go to your room in a body, haul you out of bed and hang you out of the window on the end of a rope."

The professor gave a start.

He fastened a searching look upon Frank's face.

The boy met his scrutiny with calm indifference.

"I believe you, Page!" he hissed at length.

"They all hate you and want to get square for the lickings you have given them," proceeded the boy.

"They do, hey? Well, I'll be ready for them!"

"I did not hear all their plans, for they meant to arrange everything to-night in the dormitory. There is more to the scheme, but what it is can only be found out by some one being in the room."

"Ah, I see!"

"Now, there's a way for you to catch them in the very act, sir."

"How do you mean, Page?"

"Why, you could get into my cot before they retire, cover your head up with the quilt, and, as they will think it is me, you could overhear everything that goes on."

"Bright boy! It's a good suggestion. I will follow it, and when I catch them—well, I pity them, that's all."

Frank chuckled inwardly.

The professor had fallen into his trap.

"I pity you," he thought, "if you take my place in bed and those fellers are intent upon hazing me."

"Page, you are a good boy, and I forgive you for what you have done to me, as you have redeemed yourself. Now, go and dress."

The boy left the study with a broad grin on his face.

He changed his clothes, made his toilet, and when the supper bell rang he marched downstairs with the rest of the boys.

The supper was a starvation meal, as the professor was a mean and miserly man and saved money by giving the boys poor fare.

When it was over the boys had two hours for study before going to bed, and while they were so engaged Frank told them he was going to turn in.

He saw by their significant looks that they had him marked as a victim.

Meeting Bings in the hall, the professor sent him to roost

in his bed, and, armed with a rattan, Bings sneaked up to the boys' dormitory, crept between the sheets in Frank's cot and covered himself up.

In due time the boys came trooping up, whispering, and finally turned in.

The professor patiently waited, but nothing was done, and as the hours passed by he became very sleepy and dozed off.

Twelve, one and two o'clock chimed in the clocks and all was still.

Unable to resist longer, Bings fell fast asleep and snored.

The clock struck three.

Scarcely had it done so when every boy in the room quietly arose, armed with a bed slat, and glided like a troop of ghosts toward the sleeping professor.

CHAPTER III.

Armed with their bed slats, the boys in the dormitory glided toward the cot assigned to Frank just as the clock struck three.

They heard the professor's snores and thought he was Frank, as he had drawn the bed covers up over his head.

Frank was not asleep in Bings' bed, but had crept up into the hall and was crouching against the partially open door. Bings had his rattan concealed under the cot covers.

"Now, boys," whispered the ringleader, "sock it to him."

They had ranged themselves all around the cot, with their slats upraised.

Biff—bang!

Thump—bump!

At the signal down came the slats.

Every one that hit the professor sounded like a pistol shot.

He uttered a terrific yell, flew out of the cot, and the boys scattered.

The low-burning lamp was close to the door, and Frank reached in his arm and suddenly turned it up full blaze.

The room was flooded with light.

Every one of the boys now saw Bings.

"It's the professor!" yelled several of them in horror.

"Thunder and lightning!" roared Bings, as he danced around and made his rattan whistle through the air. "So I've caught you, have I?"

Filled with alarm, the boys scattered.

With a whoop Bings sailed into them.

Right and left he struck out with his rattan, and every

time it hit a victim there came a terrific yell, as the boys only had on their night shirts, and therefore caught the full benefit of the blows.

They danced and capered around like lunatics, screaming with pain, begging for mercy and frightened into spasms.

Some of them dodged under the cots, some got on top of them, some hid behind the furniture, and several made a rush for the door.

But Frank pulled it shut and held it so they couldn't get out.

"I'm getting hunk with a vengeance for what they did to me on the football grounds," chuckled Frank as a big, broad grin overspread his face.

Swish—swish—plunk! whistled the rattan in the room.

Every time it came down there arose a howl of anguish, the pattering of flying footsteps and the diabolical voice of Bings roaring:

"Take that! And that! And that!"

"Murder!" yelled one of the boys.

"Help! Help!" shrieked another.

Then the rest chimed in.

"Oh! Ouch!"

"I'm killed!"

"Lord! My back!"

"Cheese it; here he comes!"

"Run, fellers."

Bang—crash! went several bowls and pitchers to the floor.

Boom—thump! followed the sound of overturned furniture.

A terrible pandemonium was going on, above which rose the continual whistling of the rattan and the voice of Bings yelling:

"Stand, you scoundrels, till I bang the heads off you!"

Frank pushed the door ajar and peeped in.

The room was in an uproar, the furniture was upset and scattered all over the floor, and Bings was charging upon the flying boys like a wild bull, dealing agony wherever he went.

"Jerusalem, what a circus!" laughed Frank. "I never

Biff! went the door open just then, and out rushed Bings.

He caught the boy laughing till his jaws ached, down came his rattan upon Frank's loins, and with a howl the young imp sprang in the air, clapping his hand to the injured part.

"Laugh at me, will you?" roared the furious principal. "I believe you got me in here on purpose to have me assaulted. Confound you, I'll peel the hide from your carcass!"

He aimed another crack at the boy, but Frank managed

to dodge it, and straddling the banisters he flew downstairs.

"Good Lord!" he groaned, ruefully. "I'm in for it after all!"

He locked himself in the professor's bedroom and turned in.

A short time afterward Bings came down and tried to get into his room, but failed to open the door.

He pounded, kicked, roared and threatened.

But all to no purpose.

Frank would not let him in.

He had to sleep the rest of the night on a sofa.

On the following morning Frank arose before Bings was awake, and stealing up to the dormitory, he crept into his own cot.

There was weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth when the boys heard the first bell at daybreak and arose to dress.

Frank got up with them.

They began to pass comments upon each others' miseries.

"I think it's the new scholar's fault, fellers," said Muggins, presently.

They all turned upon Frank and scowled at him.

"You are right," he coolly assented. "I caused the row."

"Then you wait till we get you outside."

"Hold on! Just think what you tried to do to me."

"What of it? It's customary here."

"I simply turned the tables on you."

As this fact dawned upon them, their vindictive feelings relented.

They recognized the young joker's superiority, and admired it in spite of themselves, although they had got the worst of it.

"He's a corker," observed Muggins, dryly.

"Besides," said Frank, with a wary smile, as he exhibited a black and blue streak on his body, "I had to pay for the game too."

"By gosh, he caught some of it!" chuckled one of the boys.

This was balm for their feelings.

"I made old Bings pay for it, though," continued Frank.

"How—how?" eagerly asked the rest.

"Got in his room and locked him out all night. He had to go to roost on a sofa," replied Frank. "He was as mad as fury."

This tickled the forlorn crowd so that they absolutely laughed.

Their respect for Frank kept increasing.

Although they admired his cheek, they felt sore against him yet.

"You'll do," said Muggins. "You've helped us to get

square with him. I guess we'd better leave you alone. I like your nerve. We are going to have a game of football this afternoon, and I want you for a full back. Will you join us?"

"With pleasure," replied Frank, promptly.

But he did not observe the grim wink that passed among the crowd, and they all went down to breakfast.

The professor sat at the head of the dining table with a cynical smile on his face, and silently eyed his victims as they took their places.

When they were all seated he arose amidst the most profound silence, and fixing a cold, cruel look upon them, he said:

"I will not dwell long upon the occurrences of last night. But I will say if there is a repetition in this school of any such disgraceful actions I will single out the ringleaders, flog them within an inch of their lives, and put them in jail. You have all been severely punished. But to let you see that I mean business, I will finish the penalty by restricting you from breakfasting at my expense."

He then sat down and began to devour his own food.

The hungry boys sat around the table, watching him wistfully, and gazed yearningly at their empty cups and platters.

Frank was amazed and indignant.

"He is a mean, tyrannical old brute!" he muttered.

The unfortunates, with blank-looking faces, were compelled to sit there without moving or saying a word, watching Bings eating his breakfast, until he had finished.

Then they were marched into the recitation room.

There Frank was given a desk, and the usual course of lessons were gone through until noontime, when the boys were marched back to the dining-room and given a meager allowance of food.

Ravenous from being deprived of their breakfast, they made the most of the poor fare, and then returned to their lessons.

At three o'clock the delinquents of the day were marched up to the professor like convicts. Each one in turn received a severe drubbing, and was kept in, deprived of his recreation.

The bad impression Frank first had of the school was augmented.

"Pop hasn't put me in a bed of roses," he muttered in gloomy tones. "My chief study here must be to devise ways of getting the best of Bings. If I have to go through all that the rest of the poor fellows have to suffer, I'll be a corpse inside of a week."

With a pitying glance at the fellows who were detained, Frank went out and joined the boys in the playground.

They had O'Hara with them for an umpire, as they were

going to play a game of football, and the teams were then picked out.

Frank was given a position near one of the goals, and the game began when the ball shot out in the field.

There was a rush for the ball, which was dark-gray colored.

Frank was in the midst of it.

In a moment a dozen of the boys had him down.

They piled on top of him in a heap of squirming humanity, and the next thing he knew he was kicked in the ribs, punched in the jaw, rolled over and over, slammed up and down, trodden on, and finally had his head jammed in a hole in the ground.

"Let me up!" he yelled, struggling to get out of it.

A grin overspread every face.

The boys had not forgotten what he did to them the previous night.

Under the guise of that rough-and-tumble game, every one of them were pledged to get at least one bang at him, when, if any objection was made, they could attribute it to the play.

Out went the ball from under the crowd, and away dashed the boys after it, leaving Frank to get upon his feet, feeling as if he was kicked by a mule, but never suspecting the game they had played on him.

A second struggle took place, while he was running toward them, and the ball came whizzing out on the field, when Frank sent it home.

It scored for Frank's side, and the boy was heartily cheered.

"Luck out, me bye!" said O'Hara to him in a warning whisper.

"For what?" asked Frank, breathlessly.

"It's afther killin' yer they'll be."

"Oh, I can stand it!"

"Shure, it's a game they have on ye."

"How do you mean?"

"They manes to bring you home in sections."

Frank now began to realize that the pounding he received was not the usual result of the game.

O'Hara's warning caused it to dawn upon his mind that he had received an extraordinary amount of thumping.

"So they are making a guy of me, are they?" he asked.

"A coopse, me bye—a coopse!" replied O'Hara.

"I'm glad you told me. I'll see if I can't baffle them."

He had no time to say any more just then, as he was called out into the field, and the ball came spinning out of the goal.

"Now, Page! Stop it!" yelled Muggins, excitedly.

The ball landed into Frank's hands with a thud.

He glanced at the rest, and saw them rushing toward him.

Instead of passing it over their heads, he let it drive at their legs, and the next moment there was a terrific scramble around it.

Kick after kick was let drive, and many a howl arose as shoes encountered shins, while the ball was driven here and there among them.

"They've got a fair return so far," laughed Frank, as he watched them pounding and kicking each other every time they missed the ball.

There was a hard tussle going on now, and the ball was kept in the field under an old apple tree, behind which Frank dodged.

He happened to glance up at the tree, when his gaze fell upon an enormous dark-gray hornets' nest hanging from a branch.

A grim smile crossed his face.

"Oh, if I could only get it down!" he muttered.

Away rushed the crowd after the ball, every one watching it with such eager interest that no attention was paid to Frank.

The moment he saw that he was not observed, he shinned up that tree like a monkey, with a piece of turf in his hand.

Stuffing up the hole in the big puff ball with the turf, he imprisoned the hornets, causing them to buzz angrily inside.

Detaching the nest from the branch, he slid to the ground with it, and laid it behind the trunk of the tree, out of sight.

He did not leave the spot where he stood, but patiently waited.

"I don't believe they'll try to put up a job on me again in a hurry," soliloquized he, as he watched them. "They seem to be trying to get that ball into my hands all the time, so they can pile on top of me, and lambaste the deuce out of my hide!"

The boy who had the ball now saw Frank.

Although he was on the opposing side, he sent it toward our hero.

Frank was quick to observe this evidence of their game on him.

He caught the ball, dodged behind the tree, laid the ball down out of sight, picked up the hornets' nest, and ran with it.

A yell pealed from the players, not one of whom noticed the substitution, as the hornets' nest was nearly the same size and color as the ball, and the whole crowd rushed for him.

Never dreaming of the trick he was playing, they were easily fooled.

Frank waited until they were close to him.

Then he turned and hurled the hornets' nest into their midst.

They went upon it in a heap, and Frank dashed away, just as the nest burst like a pistol shot, and its inmates were released.

CHAPTER IV.

Within ten seconds after the hornets' nest was kicked open there was a panic.

It seemed for a moment as if there were a million of the angry insects buzzing in the midst of that crowd.

A chorus of yells burst from the players, and they scrambled to their feet, each individual having a swarm flying around him.

Then the hornets got their business-ends working vigorously.

Frank's tormentors were stung as they never were stung before.

They ran, they danced, they lay down, they kicked, punched, howled and begged, but they could not get away from the insects.

At a safe distance away, Frank roared with laughter.

O'Hara saw what the boy did.

It caused him to roar till tears came to his eyes.

"Howly poker!" he chuckled. "Did iver I see the aquil av that lad?"

Then he let out another roar, and fairly doubled up with mirth.

Unfortunately for O'Hara, one of the boys rushed up to him just then.

"Save me, O'Hara!" he yelled. "Chase 'em off!"

"Git out av this!" snorted the handy man, recoiling.

"Don't desert me!" shrieked the boy, chasing him up, surrounded by hornets.

"If yez don't kape yer distance, I'll murder yer wid me fut!"

"They are stinging me to death! You must help me!" roared the boy, and with one leap he reached the Irishman and flung his arms around him.

O'Hara became alarmed.

He tried to break away.

Before he could do so, the hornets went for him.

And the next moment he felt as if some one was prodding him with red-hot needles all over.

With a wild whoop, he broke from the boy and galloped desperately away, followed by half of the boy's swarm

Every one on the field but Frank was now executing a wild war-dance, and striving with might and main to beat the furious insects off, but they only made the hornets madder, and caused them to sting all the harder.

Within a short time they were a mighty sick looking crowd.

Their eyes were swelled shut, their noses were bloated, their lips were puffed up, and their ears had humps upon them.

Those hornets were not the regulation style of ordinary everyday kind, for they seemed to have gimlets at both ends, and worked them for all they were worth, irrespective of age, sex or reputation.

In a few minutes the field presented a striking appearance.

Every one of the boys was doing the striking.

In the midst of their misery Frank suddenly took pity on them.

"This way for help!" he shouted.

Instantly the whole gang charged on him.

He was going to tell them to run down into the water of the Sound to get rid of their tormentors, but before he could carry out his charitable intention, he saw that the gang were bringing all the hornets on the field toward him.

The same danger now threatened him that they suffered.

"Stand back!" he shouted in alarm.

"How can you help us?" came a dozen eager voices.

They kept straight ahead toward him, and Frank did not wait to explain his plan of action.

He ran for the water.

On came the whole crowd after him.

There was no escape for the boy except to plunge in.

Realizing this cold fact, in he went, head first, and out he waded, clothes and all, until he was up to his neck.

Instantly divining that there was relief for them in what Frank did, the boys came flying after him.

Within a few moments the whole crowd was submerged.

"Duck your heads!" shouted Frank.

Down they went, and the hornets had to let go.

In this manner they finally got rid of the pests.

The hornets kept them ducking up and down for a long time before they finally consented to take their departure.

Not until then did the boys dare to go ashore.

Grouped together upon the embankment, they presented a most pitiable but extremely comical sight, all soaking with water, their hands looking as if they had bunions on them, and their mugs twisted all out of shape.

"Gee whiz!" gasped one of them, looking at his companion interestedly. "Look at that face. It's enough to stop a clock. I—oh—ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" and he burst out laughing.

"Look at your own," retorted the other. "It's a sight. You couldn't sell it for a comic almanac chromo!"

And he burst out laughing at his companion.

This example got the rest at it.

Despite the misery they were in they all had such outrageous looking faces that they were all laughing at each other pretty soon.

In the midst of their mirth Frank came ashore.

"It's no use trying, fellows," said he. "You can't beat me."

"Beat you?" echoed one of them.

"Why, yes; I know all about it. You rung me into that game so you could knock the stuffing out of me. But you got the worst of it, didn't you?"

"It looks so," admitted Muggins.

"Are you ready to quit working me?"

"Did you spring those hornets on us?"

"Yes."

No one knew it till then.

For an instant they were inclined to get mad.

But despite their deviltry they were all good fellows at heart.

They were fairly and squarely beaten at their own game, and under a sudden generous impulse one of them yelled:

"Hurrah for Frank Page!"

The rest cheered with a will.

"He's a dandy!" commented one of them.

"Knocks us cold," added another.

"Can't be beat!" observed the third.

"We deserved all he gave," admitted one more.

"Boys, I mean to lead this crowd or bust!" said Frank.

"That settles it. We never had a leader, but we'll go you!" cried Muggins.

All the rest were satisfied, and they raised Frank upon their shoulders and marched back to the school with him, all of them looking as if they had gone through a threshing machine.

From that hour onward Frank Page was the leader of the school, and, recognizing the responsibility of his task, he made them a neat little speech.

When they reached the academy, Prof. Bings met them, and a dark scowl gathered upon his brow when he beheld their distorted faces. He was rather ugly, as he had been drinking.

"Hello!" he exclaimed in astonishment. "What does this mean?"

Frank glanced at him as if very much surprised.

"I do not know what you refer to, sir," he replied.

"Why, you idiot, don't you see those horrible faces?"

"I do not observe anything unusual, sir."

"Then you must be blind. What ails those boys' faces?"

"Nothing at all, sir," politely persisted Frank, winking at his companions.

"See here, Page, I don't want any of your fooling!" roared Bings, as his temper began to rise. "I want you all to tell me how your features got into that abnormal condition! Do you hear me?"

The boys all glanced at each other blankly and shook their heads.

"I don't see anything wrong," said one, solemnly.

"Nor I," added another.

The rest all chimed in, declaring that they never looked better nor felt better in all their lives.

Bings began to get scared, for it suddenly occurred to him that the whisky he had been imbibing had gone to his head.

"If this awful array of horrible contortions is an hallucination," he muttered, "good heavens, what else shall I see next—snakes?"

He turned pale at the bare idea of delirium tremens, and quickly making some gruff remark about not feeling very well, he retired to his room and went to bed.

A roar of laughter and a volley of snickers pealed from the boys when he was gone, and they went to their dormitory to prepare themselves for supper.

On the following day the story leaked out, however, and the professor severely rebuked the boys for fooling him.

He then took down his ever ready rattan.

"Page!" he bawled. "Come up here."

"Yes, sir," smilingly replied the boy, obeying.

"Page, you were very irreverent and impudent to me," sternly said Bings, as he fastened an ugly glare upon the boy.

"I do not recollect the occasion, sir," replied Frank, thoughtfully.

"Yes, you do!" roared Bings, banging the desk with his fist. "You asserted to my face that nothing ailed the scholars' faces. That was a deliberate falsehood. You are here to have your méretricious faults corrected. Recollect, sir, you are at Touchemup Academy. The scholars here are all incorrigible, and I touch 'em up frequently. Since you have been here, it seems to me you have made yourself more obnoxious than the whole school put together. I'm going to touch you up, sir."

As he said this, he grabbed the boy by the neck.

Then he yanked him over upon a desk.

Burning with mortification over being chastised before the whole school in such a humiliating position, Frank revolted.

He flung himself from the desk to the floor, where he bumped his head.

At the same juncture Bings brought his rattan down, and

it struck the leg of the desk with a thump that made the professor's fingers tingle.

Frank sprang to his feet, rubbing his head where he had bumped it on the floor, and every one of the boys rose hissing and yelling:

"Shame! Shame!"

They thought that Bings had hit the boy on the head.

In fact, Bings thought so himself, and he turned red in the face.

"Sit down there!" he bellowed, shaking his stick at the scholars.

"Shame! Shame!" came the cry.

It was followed by louder hisses.

"Page, go to your seat!" roared the professor.

"Yes, sir!" replied the boy, and he obeyed with alacrity.

Order was restored, and Bings glared at the boys and shouted:

"If the boys who spoke and hissed so hard just now will step this way, I'll be pleased to have them explain themselves."

No one stirred.

They did not wish to explain.

The session went on, and when the school was dismissed for the day, Frank explained to his friends that he was not hurt.

Several weeks passed by, the boy getting better acquainted with every one, and having no end of fun despite the harsh measures Jeremiah Bings exercised upon the slightest provocation.

At the end of the month a letter arrived for the boy from his father.

But it had been opened by the professor.

"I never allow my scholars to receive or send letters until I have read them first," explained Bings, coolly, as he gave the communication to the boy in the hall.

"He's a cheeky customer," thought Frank, angrily.

He then withdrew the letter and read it.

It was quite brief.

The following is a copy:

"NEW YORK, October 1, 18—.

"Dear Frank: I hope by the time this reaches you it will find you a reformed boy. I have every confidence in your professor, and I trust I shall hear a favorable report from him. Please let me hear how you are getting along.

"Your father, "JOHN THOMAS PAGE."

"I want you to reply to that letter," said Bings.

"Very well, sir," replied Frank, opening the fly-page.

"Ah—what's this?"

Upon the other page was written:

"P. S.—Inclosed find a ten-dollar bill for spending money."

There was no money in the envelope, however.

"Why, that's funny!" said Frank. "Where is that money?"

"As I do not allow my scholars to handle money here," replied the professor, coolly, "I have taken possession of it."

"The deuce! You haven't got any right to do that."

"No swearing, if you please, sir. Now, I want you to understand that I am your master here, and I shall spend the money for your books and other needful things," said Bings.

"But everything is charged against my father!" retorted Frank.

"Shut up! Clear out of here! What do you know about charges?"

The boy left the hall in disgust, for he saw that Bings had appropriated the money to his own use.

He went to his room and wrote to his father:

"Dear Pop: For heaven's sake take me out of this den. Bings pounds us, starves us, don't teach us anything, and is running up a big bill against you. He stole the ten dollars you sent me, and is the meanest old brute in creation. It is awful here. I can't stand it much longer, and if you don't stop his cruelty I'll run away."

Inclosing the letter in an envelope, he went to get a postage stamp from Mr. Holden, when Bings met him in the hall.

"Have you answered your father's letter, Page?" he asked.

"Yes, sir, and I'm going for a stamp to mail it," replied Frank.

"Just step into my study first. I want to read that letter before you send it," said Bings, as he pulled the boy into his room.

CHAPTER V.

A look of unutterable consternation crossed Frank's face.

If the professor once read the letter he had written to his father, Bings would not only prevent it going, but might touch him up as well.

He tried to expostulate, and hung back, but Bings wouldn't have it, for he dragged him into the study and locked the door.

"Now, hand me that letter," said he, facing the boy.

"I ain't going to let you read my private letters," replied Frank.

"Oh, yes you are. I have already told you I don't allow letters to come to my scholars or go to their parents until I first read them."

"If it wasn't for that rule I'd be in the ten dollars my father sent me, which you hooked," exclaimed Frank, angrily.

"Shut up about that money, will you?"

"It's the truth, sir."

"Will you hand over that letter?"

"No."

"Then I'll make you!"

He grappled the boy, but before he could get the letter from his hand Frank crumpled it up and jammed it in his mouth.

"I ain't a goat," said he, "but hang me if I don't eat the paper first."

The professor was furious.

He made the boy spit it out.

But when Frank did so the letter was beyond all reading.

Bings upbraided the boy unmercifully, and then dragged him over to his desk, upon which lay an open envelope addressed to Mr. Page, from which he abstracted a letter.

"This is the sort of an epistle I want you to compose!" he snarled. "Now, you just cast your eyes over what I have written to your father. I will leave you locked in here. When I return I expect to find that you have written a letter to your parents which will reflect not only favorably on me, but upon this academy as well."

"Gee! I don't see how I can do it," replied Frank, wryly.

The professor shook his fist at the boy, and swearing at him under his breath, he marched from the room and locked Frank in.

The young imp then read Bings' letter.

It was a flowery lie from beginning to end, for it said that Frank was rapidly becoming a model young man, who paid more attention to his Bible than his friends, and it went on to say that he was never chastised, that he was well fed, greatly loved, and treated like an only son of the professor's.

Inclosed with the letter was a bill of expenses a yard long, which Frank had never incurred.

"The old hypocrite. I'll fix him!" he muttered.

Then he wrote interlined with one of the professor's paragraphs:

* * * "See the next page——"

Opening the fly leaf he wrote on the inside:

"The foregoing letter is a lie from beginning to end. I haven't had any expenses since I've been here. He hooked the ten dollars you sent me, he starves and beats me, and if

you leave me here much longer I'll die. I have got to write you a pack of lies at his dictation, or get my neck broke, but don't you believe a word I inscribe."

He then folded up Bings' letter and put it back in the envelope, after which he indited a letter similar to the professor's.

It seemed to corroborate his effusion in every particular.

By the time he finished it, Bings returned.

He looked highly pleased when he read it, and, praising the boy's composition and penmanship, he folded the letter, put it in the envelope with his own, sealed and stamped it, and sent O'Hara to the post-office with it.

Unfortunately Frank's father had gone off traveling on business when the letter reached New York, so he did not get it for a long time afterward.

Frank considered himself well out of an unlucky scrape.

A week passed by, during which he kept unusually quiet.

On the following Saturday half holiday he left the school, and, going out into the yard in search of the boys, he observed old Dinah standing at the barn door, talking to O'Hara.

"Faith, it's quare entoirely where thim chickens wint," the handy man was saying. "It isn't meself that would be afther castin' reflections on you, ould woman, but, be heavens, a hin has only ter luck at a coon ter disappear."

"Lawd amassy!" replied the old wench, indignantly. "Yo' mean fo' ter say I done stole de 'fessor's chickens, honey?"

"No, indade, me jewel, but then ye have ther looks av a bandy-legged son who looks loike a lath ivery toime he do be's callin' ter see yer, an' whin he goes away any wun would take him fer a cask av lager beer, he has that shwell to his corporation."

"G'way, yo' mean, good-fo'-nuthin' Irishier; yo' mean ter speculate dat my chile done stuff dem chickings inter de buzzom ob he's shirt? Land o' Goshen, honey, I'se ashame ob ye, I is."

"Who has ther key to ther egg factory?"

"Me."

"Then who's responsible?"

"Reckon I is, chile."

"Thin look out that no more av thim birds disappear."

"'Deed, dar's no tellin' but whut yo' am ter blame."

"Me hook ther chickens! Get out! Ain't I afther livin' here all ther toime? What could I do wid 'em?"

"Doan I lib yere, too, all de time?"

"But, bedad, I have no son comin' here thin, an' goin' away fat!"

"Doan yo' make fun ob my boy, sah! He done got a drefful sickness. De doctah he say dat he got de epizoodic,

sah, an' dat what make him swell up. Now yo' leabe him alone—yo' heah?"

O'Hara burst out laughing at Dinah.

"Faix, it's only horses an' jackasses as his ther disaise," said he, "an' as your bye is no horse, he must be a jackass."

"Whut!" roared Dinah, bridling up furiously. "Yo' call my boy names like dat? You want me ter fire a stone at yo'—huh?"

"Come now, be aisy! Go back inter the house, ould woman——"

"I ain't a ole woman!" flared Dinah. "I'se only fifty-fo'."

She picked up a stable broom and O'Hara retreated.

He saw that he had her dander away up in G.

If he kept on teasing her he stood a very good chance of having the roof taken off his head.

Before the wench could do him any damage, however, the professor came around the barn.

He had, as usual, been sneaking around trying to catch some one doing something for which he could assert his contemptible authority, and overheard all the foregoing.

A dark frown mantled his face.

The idea of being robbed was maddening to him.

"De 'fessor!" gasped Dinah upon seeing him, and she started back, confused and afraid.

"Begorra, it's in ther neck I'll get it now!" groaned O'Hara, whom the professor was always reprimanding for loafing, and he hastily grabbed a pitchfork and began to bed down the horse.

Bings paused in the doorway.

"O'Hara!" he roared.

"Yis, sor," humbly replied the handy man.

"What are you bedding down the horse in the daytime for?"

"Just to kape busy, sor. I hates ter be idle."

"Yes, you do. Rake out that straw again."

"Yis, sor."

Dinah made a rush for the house as soon as the professor's back was turned, but he heard her big plantations waltzing off, and turning around, he yelled:

"Hey! Come back here! Where are you going?"

"I'se gwine to fotch a pail ob watah, sah," puffed Dinah, pausing.

"What are you fooling away your time out here for?"

"Ain't doin' nuffin' ob de kine, sah."

"Do I pay you to stand out here gossiping with O'Hara?"

"Bress yo' heart, sah, he done call me an' say dat I done stole de chickings, Massa Bings, but I didn't done it, no-how."

"O'Hara, are any of my hens missing?"

"Yis, sor."

"How many?"

"Two."

"Which ones?"

"Ther Shanghai rooster——"

"Is that a hen?"

"No, sor. An' ther banty——"

"That's another rooster."

"Yis, sor."

"Then what did you say they were hens for?"

A puzzled look crossed O'Hara's face, and he scratched his head.

He had not thought of making a distinction of sex.

"I give it up, sor," said he.

"Those fowls were worth two dollars," said Bings.

"Bedad, they ain't worth a cint now."

"Oh, yes they are," coolly replied the professor, "for I am going to dock a dollar apiece from your wages at the end of the month. Perhaps that will teach you both to take better care of my property."

And with a satisfied grin on his face Bings walked away. Dinah and O'Hara groaned.

They did not appreciate the professor's little joke.

"Be heavens, it's a call on Deacon Hardscrabble's roost I'll be afther makin' ter-night," threatened O'Hara, gloomily. "I'll have two av his roosters, or me name is not Dinah."

"It am yo' fault fo' lettin' on dat de chickings was mis-sin'!" wailed Dinah. "Now yo' look out for me, honey. I'se a bad niggah when I'se riled. Bettah git yo life 'sured. I'se gwine to put fishbones in yo' pancakes in de mornin' an' choke yo' to deff!"

And with this tragic threat she retreated into the house.

Frank had taken in the whole thing with a big grin on his mug, and when the wench was gone he went over to the barn.

"So you and Dinah got caught stealing chickens, eh?" he chuckled, as O'Hara looked up at him with a mournful eye.

"Me?" growled the handy man, indignantly. "Did iver ye hear av an Irishman sthalin' a mane, contimptible chicken?"

"No, an Irishman would take the whole coop," replied Frank.

"Arrah, quite yer jokin'. Shure this divilmint cosht me a dolly."

"You are foolish to stand it."

"I can't help meself."

"Are you sure Dinah is guilty?"

"Is the evidence av a rooster's tail shtickin' out between ther tails av her son's coat anny proof?" demanded O'Hara.

"That would look queer."

"I wuz always suspishy av that nagur, an' now I know he is a chicken expressman."

"Why don't you throw all the blame on Dinah, then?"

"Tell me how I kin db it an' I'm yer friend foriver."

"Corral all the fowls, put them in a bag, and quietly drop them into Dinah's bedroom to-night. If they are found there won't that make her look guilty?"

"Be heavens, it's ther great head yez have entoirely!" chuckled O'Hara delightedly. "I have me dolly saved already."

"Are you going to do it?"

"I will if it cosht me a leg."

"You will have to begin operations before she retires."

"An' what time is that?"

"Nine o'clock."

"At eight I'll have thim bagged!"

"You can get up into her room by the back staircase."

"I can, an' divil a man will see me goin' that way."

As happy as a clam at high tide over getting out of his scrape by throwing all the blame on Dinah, the handy man lit his pipe, whistled up a tune, and Frank left him.

The afternoon passed away and night fell.

As the month of October had set in, the evenings were so chilly that the boys were glad to stay indoors.

At the regular hour the bell rang for them to retire to their rooms, and the whole crowd obeyed the order except Frank.

He was left alone in the parlor.

"Page!" exclaimed Bings, coming in and scowling at him.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy.

"Why don't you go up with the rest?"

"Because I want to speak to you privately, sir."

"Ah! What have you to say to me?"

"I heard your conversation to-day with Dinah and O'Hara."

"Yes, yes. You mean about the robbery of my fowls?"

"Exactly so, sir. Since then I have discovered who the culprit is."

"Indeed! And who may it be?"

"O'Hara."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Prove it."

"I will. Put on your hat and go out to the hen-roost. You will find him there in the act of robbing the coop now."

"Page, are you telling me the truth?"

"If I ain't you can lambaste the stuffing out of me."

"Then come with me and I'll verify your report."

And procuring a big horse pistol, Bings went out with the boy.

CHAPTER VI.

It was dark and cloudy when Frank and Bings crept noiselessly out the back door and crossed the yard.

"Gee! what a give-away for O'Hara," chuckled the boy. "Won't he be mad when he finds how I've turned the tables on him! Oh, mamma! I wouldn't swap places with him for a farm!"

"Page!" gasped Bings excitedly; "there's a light in the chicken coop!"

"I see it, sir," answered the boy.

"The thief is at work!"

"Plug him full of bullets, sir."

"My pistol hasn't got any bullets in it, Page."

"What is it loaded with?"

"Carpet tacks. I put them in four years ago."

"Hasn't the old gun been shot off since then?"

"No. I had no need to use it before."

"Then the Lord help you!" muttered the boy.

"Is O'Hara alone in this job?"

"Oh, no. You see, I caught him talking to a pair of the most villainous looking ruffians, and they planned to break in and—— By jingo! See! The light is moving in the coop. There's a man now!"

"It's a nigger!" gasped the professor.

A short distance away from them was one of the windows of the coop, and inside they beheld what looked like a negro.

His face was turned toward them.

In fact, he saw them.

And vanished from view.

"It isn't O'Hara, after all!" exclaimed Frank.

"Some one has preceded him."

"Looks like it. Oh, my! Just listen to those chickens squawk!"

A terrific noise now arose in the bird cage.

Wings were beating, roosters were yelling and hens were screeching, while every moment there came a thump against the windows, and glass after glass was broken.

"The scoundrel is at them!" roared Bings.

"Fire at him—fire!" gasped Frank.

The professor aimed the pistol, with both hands grasping the butt, and closing his eyes, he screwed his face up in a knot and turned his head aside.

Frank had no desire to get blown full of rusty iron and he skipped behind a tree.

The professor pulled the trigger.

A terrible roar followed as the ancient machine went off—a roar not unlike that of a forty-pound gun.

A fearful charge went flying toward the coop and the pistol kicked back so hard that Bings was knocked flying.

He let out a yell, as he turned a back somersault and landed on his ear, and his head and arms felt as if they had been blown out of joint.

The charge struck every pane of glass in the coop, went crashing through, hardly leaving a frame whole, and slaughtered half the chickens.

"Hurrah!" yelled the delighted boy as he popped from behind the tree. "Good shot! I'll bet you soaked him that time!"

"Page!" groaned Bings, dismally, "send for the doctor."

"What's the matter now?" demanded the young rogue.

"I'm chock full of iron."

"Is that so?"

"I'm a dead man, I tell you."

"Did anything hit you, sir?"

"The pistol exploded. My arms are blown off."

"No, they ain't."

"Well, they feel like it."

"The pistol is all right, too."

"Great heavens, then what struck me?"

"She kicked—that's all."

The professor straightened up and slowly arose to his feet. He carefully examined himself and finally looked relieved.

"Safe!" he muttered. "Strange! I thought I was a corpse."

"Professor, you're a dandy!"

"Sir?"

"I mean you are a daisy shot."

"Have I killed any one, Page?"

"Lord! I should say so! I heard the gore splash when you fired."

"Let us examine the battlefield, Page."

"Look out that one of the thieves don't waylay you with a brick."

The professor picked up his pistol.

He was not very courageous in the face of danger.

But he assumed a bold front and remarked grandly:

"If any one attacks me I shall not be responsible for his death."

"But you haven't got another shot in your pistol, sir."

"Hush! Do not betray our weakness to the enemy. We can frighten them, if nothing else. Go ahead, Page; go ahead!"

"No, sir! You've got the pistol; you lead the way."

"Then you take the pistol."

Laughing in his sleeve at Bings, the boy took the weapon and they drew near the coop, where the professor halted.

"If any one is there, let him step out!" he bawled in the most threatening tones. "Refuse to appear and you perish!"

No answer came back.

'The chicken coop was as still as death.

Bings was reassured.

"They must all be dead," he remarked solemnly. "Page, I call upon you as a witness that, if I am arrested, you will prove that I shot in defence of my property."

"I'll stand by you, if you get hung for it!" the boy asserted.

They reached the smashed window, and, peering in, they saw that the place was bespattered with gore.

Ten dead chickens lay on the floor, and the rest were roosting high, without enough feathers left on them to cover a canary.

And the thief was gone.

A groan of dismay escaped the professor.

He had ruined his coop and killed his own fowls!

"Great hambone!" gasped he. "See what I've done."

"Killed 'em yourself," commented Frank, with a grin.

"Where is the criminal I shot at?"

"He must have got out before you fired."

"That settles it. Some one will have to pay for this."

"There isn't any one handy that you can nail, sir."

"It's your fault for bringing me out here!"

"My fault?" stammered Frank, beginning to feel uncomfortable.

"Yes. If you hadn't brought me out here, I wouldn't have done this, would I?" demanded Bings, in exasperated tones.

"But you would have been robbed."

"The deuce I would! Confound you, it's your fault, every bit of it."

"No, it isn't!"

"Don't you answer me back!"

"I'm no dog!"

"I'll make you pay for all this damage."

"You'll have a hard job doing it."

"Shut up!"

"I won't!"

"I'll make you!"

And so saying, Bings grabbed the young imp, and, hauling off, he cuffed him right and left.

"Help! Help!" roared Frank.

"Shut up, I tell you!"

"Murder! Police!" continued the boy.

"Good Lord! you'll arouse the whole school."

"Fire! Rats! Rats! Rats!" howled Frank.

He struggled to get away from the irate schoolmaster, and his cries aroused every one in the academy.

Window after window flew up with a bang all over the back of the building, and numbers of white-robed figures appeared in the casement.

"Save me!" yelled the boy. "I'm getting murdered!"

"It's Page!" he heard them shout.

He tore himself away from the professor by slipping out of his coat, the collar of which Bings had gripped.

No sooner had Frank made his escape, when the boys all armed themselves with missiles of every description.

They could not distinguish who Bings was in the dense gloom, but faintly made out the outlines of his figure.

It was evident to them by Frank's voice that the boy was in the yard, and had been assaulted by a man.

Observing the latter individual they began to bombard him with the articles they had hastily gathered for that purpose, as they feared that they had no time to go down to Frank's assistance.

In the meantime their voices rang out in a terrible clamor:

"Page is in trouble!" shouted one of them.

"A man is killing him!" added another.

The rest then chimed in:

"Soak him, fellows!"

"Lay the brute out!"

"Get out of the way, Frank!"

"Kill the big wretch!"

"Hey! Hey! Hey!"

And down came a scuttle of coal all over Bings.

It was rapidly followed by a fusillade of combs, brushes, crockery, shoes, cuspidors, and a score of similar objects.

They landed all over the professor, and he yelled and raved at the boys like a madman.

"Stop it!" he howled, furiously. "It's me—it's me!"

"Give it to him again, boys!" cried Muggins.

The uproar they made so drowned his voice that none of them recognized him, and down went another shower.

Bings was frantic.

Pelted all over, he vainly strove to dodge the missiles.

Biff! came a wash basin down on his nose.

Plunk! went a slop pail upon his cocoanut.

Bang! came a towel rack on his neck.

He danced around, and finally went down under a shower.

Frank forgot the pounding he got, and, bursting out laughing at the pickle Bings was in, dodged into the school.

Bings swore like a pirate.

Then he bounced to his feet.

"By the furies, I'll slaughter you!" he screamed, wildly.

Down came another shower upon him, and, half frantic with rage, he picked up an armful of the things and let them rip up at the windows one by one with all his might.

Crash! went pane after pane of glass.

Thump! went missile after missile.

Now the boys were catching it, and they retreated from window after window, as the fusillade struck them.

Jingle! jingle! jingle! went the glass, and the professor

kept it up until every one was smashed, and he had driven all the boys away.

Dinah and Mr. Holden did not escape the furious pelting the professor poured up at the windows, for he could not distinguish friend from foe.

By the time he had cleared the windows he looked like a wreck, and charged on the academy door to get in at them.

To his dismay, he found that Frank had locked him out.

CHAPTER VII.

Despite all the professor's raving, pounding, threatening and every other means he resorted to, he could not get into the school.

Every door and window on the ground floor was fastened, and all but the scholars were securely locked in their rooms, convinced that a lunatic was besieging the academy.

As soon as Frank joined the boys, however, he let them into the secret of what had transpired.

A roar of laughter greeted his recital.

They were all immensely pleased to learn how furiously they had evened up matters with Bings for his mean treatment of them.

"Don't let the beggar in! Keep him out all night!" advised Frank.

"You bet we will," replied one of the boys.

"No doubt we'll all catch it to-morrow for what has been done," said Frank, "and we may as well have the worth of the licking."

"That's the talk!"

"Now you're shouting!"

"Let's go to bed."

"I won't let him in."

"Served the old brute right."

These remarks came from the gang in a volley.

That settled Bings' fate; he had to roost out all night.

On the following morning every one was aroused by a furious uproar out in the barn, and they heard Bings yell:

"You will plan to rob my hen roost, will you?"

"Lave go av ther hair av me head!" roared O'Hara.

"He's at it already!" whispered Frank, gloomily.

The rest of the scholars began to glance at each other, feeling rather scared about their own fate now.

A tremendous shower of blows came from the barn.

"I'll teach you to steal my chickens!" raved Bings.

"Shtop! I didn't! Begob, I wuz down ter ther village whin ther robbery tuck place!" replied O'Hara.

"Then how do you account for the burnt cork blacking all over your face, and how do you account for one of your feed bags and the stable lantern being in the coop?"

"As fer me hein' blackened, I'd have ye know I wuz playin' in a minstreels. As fer ther bag an' lantern, shure I know nothin' about thim."

Bings settled the matter with O'Hara by threatening to bounce him, and then came sailing toward the academy.

A loud groan pealed from every one of the boys.

They saw that they were all in for a terrible pounding.

"By gosh, fellers!" said Muggins, "he will half kill us!"

"Hold on!" replied Frank, determinedly. "He can't handle the whole gang if we stick together. I see a way out of the trouble."

"How—how?" came the eager question on all sides.

"Are you all game?"

"For anything."

"Then we'll revolt!"

"What! The whole school?"

"Of course. That's where our safety lies."

Singly they could do nothing, and they knew it.

Expecting an unmerciful pounding all around, every one of them assented to Frank's bold proposition.

Mr. Holden let the frantic professor in, and got a punch in the eye for his trouble.

Then Bings came down the hall into the school-room like a whirlwind, where he paused, glaring balefully at the boys.

"Ah!" roared he, "so here you are, hey?"

Not one answered him, and he observed their rebellious looks.

A foreboding of the truth flashed across his mind, but he was not going to lose his grip by appearing to fear them.

"I'm going to whale the whole lot of you!" he snarled. "And when I get through, you shall have nothing to eat until to-morrow! Do you understand? You all know very well what this is for. Now, you—Page—come over here!"

He took his rattan from the blackboard shelf and spit on his hands.

Frank did not budge.

"Do you hear me?" shrieked Bings, wildly.

"You ain't going to touch up any of us!" quietly said the boy.

"What! WHAT! WHAT!"

"I said it."

Bings turned as pale as death.

His first suspicion was verified by the boy's defiant reply.

With a threatening gesture, he raised his rattan and made a rush into the midst of them, counting upon the terror he had always inspired by this tactic.

All the boys pluckily stood their ground.

They were boys who would be boys in the unbounded

freedom of their actions, but they were kept down like wild beasts by a method which had no salutary effect upon them.

In order to tame such mischievous spirits as they possessed required far different treatment than that employed by Bings.

He brought his rattan down upon Frank's arm, but the next instant it was snatched from his grasp, and the boy broke it over his knee and cast the pieces to the floor.

"Take warning, professor!" he cried impressively. "Don't you attempt to do that again. We won't stand it."

Bings curbed his fury by a violent effort.

He glared at the boys, but they met his glance fearlessly and unflinchingly.

To keep on with his intolerable tyranny meant, he saw, the quick breaking up of his school.

For a moment he was puzzled how to act in order to avert the impending catastrophe.

He must have time to think the matter over.

He therefore smothered his resentment and said, in low tones:

"Disperse! I will talk to you about this to-morrow."

A feeling of relief took possession of the boys, for they saw that by their bold stand they had averted a terrible thrashing.

Their admiration for Frank was increased.

It was Sunday.

Bings failed to keep his threat to starve them.

On the following day he gave them a severe lecturing, and thus the matter ended, as far as chastisement went.

But he made the boys study harder and kept them up to a certain strict rule of discipline around which they could not very well get.

Frank tried hard to be good.

It was a task he was used to.

Many tempting opportunities presented themselves to raise the mischief during the term of his probation, but he resolutely refrained from taking advantage of them.

His object was to let the effect of his last racket blow over, and fully a month passed by before it was fairly forgotten.

The boy had not yet heard from his father in reference to the letter he had sent, but as he knew that business frequently called him away for a protracted length of time he did not wonder at it very much.

With considerable tact, Bings gradually worked himself back to his former methods.

He banged and starved and abused the boys dreadfully again, but as they had recovered from their rebellious spirit they dared not resent it, and things soon ran along in the old groove once more, with possibly more strict discipline than before.

"It begins to look serious, boys," remarked Frank to his friends one cold afternoon as they came tramping back from a distant wood where they had gone chestnutting.

"Old Bings is riding on his high horse again."

"You don't intend to tackle him, do you?" asked one of the boys.

"Not much! At least, not at present."

"I wish the term was up," groaned another boy. "If I have to finish it, I'll look like a nutmeg grater when I get home."

Just then they turned a bend in the road and Frank paused.

He heard some one snoring in the bushes beside the road.

"Hello! What's that?" he asked. "Somebody asleep?"

The rest listened, and a moment afterward they heard the same sound rising and falling like a buzz saw.

Frank quickly parted the bushes and peered through.

When he turned to his friends, he had a grin on his face that stretched from ear to ear.

"By jingo, it's O'Hara!" said he.

"O'Hara?" chorused the rest in surprise.

He told the professor he was going to a wake.

"Then why don't he?" grinned Muggins.

"What?"

"Awake."

"He's so drunk he can't."

The rest now peered at the handy man.

He lay on his back with his mouth wide open, and beside him, clutched by the neck, he held a whisky bottle.

"Golly, what a jag!" gasped one of the boys.

"Let's have some fun with him," suggested Frank.

He had touched his companions in just the right spot.

They were with him right through.

"What do you intend to do to him?" asked one of them.

Frank pointed up the road at an undertaker's wagon which was coming toward them with an ice box in it, which had recently been used by a defunct farmer.

"There's our game," he remarked with a wink.

"Can you work the undertaker?"

"You leave it to me. Don't you see who's driving? It's old Pop Hopkins, of Glenwood. He's near-sighted and deaf as a post. Look mournful, boys; look mournful, will you?"

Out came their handkerchiefs, and they grouped themselves around O'Hara with a sad, dejected air.

Frank hastened to meet the old undertaker.

To the old fellow's amazement, the boy offered him a job.

"It's our handy man—O'Hara!" yelled Frank in his ear. "He had heart failure, and dropped dead down the road there."

"Oh, my! Oh, my!" gasped Hopkins.

"Can't you carry him back to school for us?"

"Do you want me to bury him?"

"Why—of course you'll get the job. If you don't want to do it, I'll send for Si Swithenbank, the other undertaker."

"No! Don't you do it!" yelled the old fellow. "I'll take him."

"Then follow me back."

He led the old fellow to the place where O'Hara lay, and saw that one of the boys had covered the handy man's face with a handkerchief to conceal his lifelike features.

They didn't give the undertaker time to examine O'Hara, but made him haul out his ice box, whereupon they lifted the Irishman into it and talked loud to drown his snores.

Then they hoisted the ice box into the wagon.

It only occupied a few moments to do it, and O'Hara snored on in blissful ignorance of what was transpiring.

Then the boys put their nut bags in the wagon, Frank jumped in and sat on the ice box, and Hopkins drove off.

On came the boys, marching with their hats off behind the wagon, and chuckling over the little surprise party they had for O'Hara, the principal and the rest of the scholars.

Frank kept his eye on O'Hara's face through the head glass.

It was a rough road they had to go over, and the jolting of the old wagon shook up the handy man so that he aroused himself.

He raised his head suddenly, and striking the glass he flung back the head piece, which worked on hinges.

"Be heavens, where am I?" growled he, huskily.

"Lie down, O'Hara, you're drunk!" muttered Frank, shoving him back.

"I am that—hic—an' glad av it!" said O'Hara.

"Shut up and be still, or Bings will see you."

"Bings, is it? To ther divil wid Bings!"

Frank glanced around at the undertaker, but he hadn't heard a word, and was looking straight ahead as he drove his old skate along.

O'Hara stuck up his head again.

He was so groggy, however, that he couldn't realize where he was or what was going on, and he soon lay back and fell asleep once more, never caring whether school kept or not.

Frank had a piece of chalk in his pocket, which he had taken from the school-room, and he drew it out and rapidly whitened the Irishman's face until he looked ghastly.

The shadows of the early fall evening had fallen when they reached the school, and the boys marching on behind began to whistle a dead march in unison, as they proceeded to the door.

Attracted by the peculiar procession, the rest of the scholars now came flocking around, asking what the matter was.

Among them was the professor.

"We found O'Hara down the road," explained Frank.

"Found him?" echoed Bings, in perplexity.

"Yes, sir, dead——"

"Dead?" echoed every one in consternation.

"Drunk!" added Frank, softly, but they did not hear him.

Before the undertaker could get down from his seat, Frank's companions seized upon the ice box containing the slumbering form of O'Hara, and hustled it into the academy.

CHAPTER VIII.

Standing upon two chairs in the parlor the ice box had a decidedly grim look, and Frank and his companions left it there.

The professor would have questioned them about the matter if he could have found them, but they had quietly vanished from sight, as they had no desire to be in at the awakening.

Moreover, they had taken pains to hustle the old undertaker away before Bings could pump him, and having stationed themselves out in the garden at the windows they lay low to take in the fun.

Bings summoned every one into the parlor.

He had a grave look upon his skinny face as he stationed himself near the ice box, from which the snores of O'Hara had fortunately ceased to come, and, casting a glance at the handy man's chalked face, Bings addressed the crowd.

"Young gentlemen," said he, with a preparatory cough, "you see before you all that remains of my old and faithful servant, Sylvester O'Hara. He was cut down in the prime of his life by the hidden hand of the dark angel, and there will doubtless be a coroner's investigation into the strange and sudden cause of his death. Come, gather round his bier, young men, and gaze for the last time upon his remains, for the funeral will take place from his uncle's sausage factory in Greenpoint."

Obediently the young gentlemen gathered around.

They saw O'Hara's ghastly face, and were satisfied that he was dead, but just then the handy man woke up.

He was stifling and sweating, for he had used up all the air there was in the ice box, and it partially sobered him.

Up flew his head, and it went through the glass plate, smashing it to fragments, startling every one in the room.

"Murder!" howled O'Hara, struggling to get out with all his might. "It's chokin' I am!"

"He has come to life again!" yelled the startled Bings.

Instantly there was a stampede among the scholars, and the imps outside the windows roared with laughter at their fright.

"Lave me out av this ice crame freezer," shouted O'Hara, as he continued his violent struggles. "It has the grip av a vise on me."

"You are a dead man!" cried one of the terrified boys.

O'Hara thought so too, when he saw where he was, and caught a glimpse of his reflection in a mirror on the wall.

"Be heavens, I'm in me coffin!" yelled he, in horror.

"Oh, gee! Look at him work to get out!" shouted Frank, and he laughed at the comical antics of the Irishman until the tears ran from his eyes and his jaws ached.

While O'Hara was fighting to get out of the ice box, the boys got jammed in the doorway in their frantic efforts to get out, and a terrific struggle ensued between them.

They shoved, punched, kicked and slammed against each other, and the jam was finally broken, when out into the hall they tumbled head-first, and, landing in a yelling heap in the middle of the floor, they lay like stranded crabs.

O'Hara had his head stuck in the frame of the head piece of the ice box, and his violent rocking upset it.

Over went the box to the floor with a bang that shook the building, the lower part of the lid flew off, the frame broke, nearly cutting the Irishman's throat, and he staggered to his feet, half sobered, and so confused that he did not know whether he was upon his head or his feet.

"Whoop!" yelled he, as he flourished his whisky bottle, upon which he had retained a tight clutch throughout all his struggles. "Show me the sucker who nailed me in that coffin and be heavens I'll paralyze him!"

The professor, although very much startled at this unexpected turn of events, saw that the man was very much alive.

He could also see with only half an eye that O'Hara was loaded, and recovering his wits he rushed up to him fiercely, and, catching him by the back of the neck, he shouted:

"You drunken scoundrel, what do you mean by playing such a trick as this upon me?"

"Thrick, is it?" gasped O'Hara, leering at him.

"Yes, sir! Blast your red nose, sober up!"

"Divil a sober. Here's lookin' at yer honor!"

And raising the bottle to his lips he took a swig.

Bings fairly gnashed his toothless gums.

"Pig!" he raved. "How dare you insult me! Pig! Pig!"

"Faith, Bings, we wuz always loike brothers."

"Shut up, and get out of here."

"Thin kish me good-bye."

He flung his arms around the wrathful professor's neck,

with a grin on his comical mug, flourished his bottle so that its contents flew all over them both, and with a hiccup, he howled:

"Hurroo!"

Burning with an insensate desire to hit him with an ax, the professor tore himself from O'Hara's embrace.

Then he got behind him.

Hauling off, he gave the handy man a raise with his hoof that lifted him from his pins and made him see stars.

The boys in the garden fairly screamed with laughter.

"Howly beans!" gasped O'Hara. "I'm struck be——"

Plunk! came the professor's boot again, and without uttering another word, O'Hara made a break for the door.

He had come to a sudden realization of his position.

After him raced the professor, and getting a grip on the back of his neck again, he didn't stop booting the luckless wretch until he had landed him into the back yard.

As Bings let him go, he saw Frank and the other boys who had put up the job go flying around the corner of the house.

Recognizing them as the ones who had brought O'Hara home, a grim look settled over his face, and he quietly procured a big rattan and hid himself in the hall.

The supper bell rang just then, and all the scholars in the building formed in a line and prepared to march downstairs.

Keeping his glance riveted upon the doors, Bings soon saw Frank and his companions come stealing in and join the ranks of the rest.

He then pounced out on them and yelled:

"Page, Muggins, Benton, Clark, Dean, Frost, Lynch, Irving and Hunt!"

"Yes, sir," replied each culprit, with a start of alarm.

"Kindly walk into my study."

"Yes, sir," and the nine guilty boys obeyed.

"Young gentlemen," continued Bings, addressing the rest, "these rowdies were the ones who have been guilty of perpetrating this outrageous practical joke. They shall suffer for it. I am going to touch them up. In the meantime you may all file down to the dining-room."

He stood watching them while they marched away.

Frank and his companions had entered the study with a feeling of woe gnawing at their hearts and a glum look on their faces.

"He has got us spotted, boys," exclaimed the young imp.

"Gosh, won't we catch it!" groaned one of them. "Did you see how mad he looked?"

"Look here! We've got a chance to protect ourselves."

"How do you mean, Frank?"

The boy pointed at a number of ancient dishes in a rack

on the wall—antique chinaware of a rare and costly kind that Bings had been collecting for many years.

"Fortify your pants with them," he remarked. "Quick, or he'll be in on us before we have a chance to do it!"

Down came the plates, and the guilty horde hardly had time to get them encased in the right position, when the door flew open and Bings stalked majestically in.

He stood eyeing them in silence a moment, idly switching his limber rattan until it whistled, and then he thundered:

"Nine of you, eh? There are just enough chairs in the room to work you all off in one bunch!"

Then he placed the chairs in a row.

"What are you going to punish us for?" boldly asked Frank.

"Oh, you know as well as I do."

"You will feel sorrier than we will if you do."

"Page, it always pains me to hurt you."

"Lord! What a whopper!"

"Eh? What did you say?"

"I said, what a kind heart you have, sir."

"Oh! I thought I heard you say something else. Now, young men, you all know from experience the favorite attitude I wish you to assume in the course of your chastisement. Be good enough to avoid a useless struggle by assuming it at once."

With a half suppressed grin, Frank winked at his companions in misery, and they all stooped over the backs of the low chairs.

The professor critically viewed the line.

He did not notice the abnormal shape of the boys' anatomies produced by the plates, and he rolled up his sleeve, took a firm grip on his rattan, and prepared to wallop them well.

Swish-plunk! went the rattan the next moment, as he rushed along the line, and every swish-plunk was followed by a terrific crash as the antique china was shattered to atoms.

Bings was so intent upon his exercise that he reached the last boy, and whanged him a terrible thump, before he became aware that a shower of broken china was pouring down each leg of every individual's pants.

The boys scarcely felt the unmerciful thumps they received, and a volley of half suppressed snickers ran from mouth to mouth.

As the jingling crockery fell out upon the carpet, Bings caught sight of it and glared at it in amazement.

"Jerusalem! What's that?" gasped he.

Instantly a roar of mirth pealed from every one of the boys.

They couldn't hold in any longer.

Up they rose in a body, and Frank grinned:

"I told you that you'd sorrier than we if you hit us."

Bings' eyes began to bulge.

"Wha—wha—what is this?" he sputtered.

Frank pointed at the empty crockery rack.

No sooner did Bings see it than the truth dawned upon him.

"My china!" he howled.

"Yes," coolly replied Frank.

"Oh, Moses!"

And with this doleful cry Bings fell on his knees.

All the starch was taken out of him.

He fairly wept as he gathered up the pieces.

Then a sudden fit of rage overcame him, and he bounded to his feet, intending to annihilate the boys.

But they scooted out of the room before he could get near them, and bolted down into the dining-room.

Bings soon afterward came down.

He had a fiendish glare of triumph in his eye, as he gazed at Frank and his companions.

"Badly as you need touching up by me," he hissed, "I won't lay a hand on you. I'll leave it for your parents to do. The china you caused to be broken was worth \$900, and it will cost the parents of each of you \$100 apiece. When I sue them for this amount, if they don't beat you within an inch of your lives it will be very funny. Now, you scoundrels, let us pray!"

CHAPTER IX.

On the following morning, while the boys were coming up from breakfast, there sounded a terrific ring at the front door-bell, and O'Hara went to answer it.

As he opened the door in came old Pop Hopkins, the undertaker, struggling on his wabbling legs under the weight of a coffin that he carried in on his shoulder.

"Howly floy!" gasped O'Hara, upon seeing what it was.

"I've brought the coffin for O'Hara's body," croaked Hopkins.

"Be heavens, he has me measure."

"If you will show me the body I will put——"

"Be off out av this, ye spalpeen! D'yer take me for a corpse?"

Hopkins glanced at him in amazement.

He now began to recognize the handy man.

"Why—bless me!" muttered he, "it's O'Hara himself."

"It's all that's left av me afther gittin' out av your bloody freezer."

"So you ain't dead after all?" disappointedly asked Hopkins.

"Bad cess to yer, why don't yer give me pizen?"

"How does it happen that you are alive?"

"Bekase I ain't dead, an' niver wuz, barrin' bein' dead dhrunk."

"Ha, ha! I see. I am the victim of a practical joke."

"Shure it's me wuz ther victim."

"Well, better luck next time," grumbled the old undertaker, "but I'll make you, Bings or somebody pay for the trouble I was put to. Where's my ice box?"

"In ther parley—that is, all as is left av it."

Hopkins lugged the coffin back to his wagon.

Then he came after his freezer.

All the boys had paused in the hall to take in the circus.

When Hopkins saw how his ice box was cracked and broken he almost raised the roof with a tirade of threats.

"If I hadn't a-bushted ther ould thing, I'd a-ben a dead man, annyway," growled the handy man.

"I wash you had!" snapped the old stiff-lifter.

"Faix, I'm sure av that!"

"Perhaps I'll get you any way pretty soon."

"Begob, I niver felt betther before in me loife."

"Yes, but after being in this box, you'll soon have a disease."

"What!" gasped O'Hara, in startled tones.

"You know the farmer I had in it before you?"

"I did, whin he wuz above ground."

"He had ther smallpox."

"Wow!" roared O'Hara.

He turned pale, and hastily began to examine himself.

A ghastly grin overspread Hopkins' face.

He pointed his skinny finger at the handy man.

"You'll catch it," he croaked warningly.

"Be heavens, I'm all av a itch now!" growled O'Hara.

He began to vigorously scratch himself.

The undertaker then departed with the ice box.

"Sind for a yaller flag, an' put me in quarantine!" howled the frightened Irishman, as he danced out into the hall.

"What's the trouble there?" growled Bings, appearing just then.

"I have the itch."

"Then clear out."

"I mane it's ther smallpox I have."

Bings recoiled from him with his hands up.

"Keep away!" he roared. "Don't come near me."

"Sind for a lawyer till I make me will," sighed O'Hara.

"You don't look as if you had the smallpox."

"No, but I have the divil av an' itch all over me."

"Then get out in the barn. Do you want to infect the academy?"

"For ther love av heaven, get me a veterinary."

And almost scared into a fit, O'Hara rushed out to the barn.

No illness developed during the ensuing week, however, and he recovered from his scare and went to work as usual.

O'Hara fought shy of the boys after that, for they teased him unmercifully about his fright, and made his life a burden to him.

Old Pop Hopkins was a spiteful fellow.

He made up his mind to sue Bings for the amount of ruin done to his stock in trade, and got out a summons for him.

Frank met the man who came to serve it, in the grounds.

"You fellows are in a fix now," said the constable, with a grin.

"What's amiss?" queried Frank, curiously.

"Hopkins has brung suit for damages."

"Is that so?"

"Ain't this here proof enough?"

He showed Frank the summons.

It struck the boy at once that there was trouble ahead for him.

"Lord!" said he, "and are you going to bring Bings to court?"

"O' course. When I serves this on him he's got to go."

"Well, all I've got to say is that you're too late."

"How d'you mean, bub?"

"Why, he's gone to New York."

"Be that so?"

"Went this morning."

"When do you 'spect him back?"

"In four days."

"Then I've had my trip here for nuthin'?"

"It looks like it."

"I reckon I'll go in an' take a rest awhile then."

"All right. Follow me and I'll show you into the parlor."

He led the constable inside and locked him in the room to prevent him coming in contact with any of the others who might give away the gag he sprung on the countryman.

The parlor door was at the back of the hall.

Bings had been watching him bringing the man in and stopped him in the hall as he emerged from the parlor.

"Say, Page, what does Constable Hogg want here?" he growled.

"Hush!" hissed the boy, holding up his finger. "He may hear you."

"Is it anything serious?" whispered Bings, nervously.

"He's got a warrant to arrest you."

"Arrest me?" gasped the professor, in astonishment.

"Yes; Hopkins has made a charge against you."

"Oh, dear! I thought he would."

"Professor, I'm protecting you."

"In what way?"

"Told him you'd gone to New York and won't be back in four days."

"Bright boy! I give you credit for great intelligence, Page."

"Thank you, sir. A phrenologist once examined my bumps and said the same thing. But it happened that the bumps he was feeling were produced by pieces of brick that struck me in a stone fight."

"No levity now, if you please, you ignorant, ill-bred puppy!"

"No offense, sir."

"What have you done with Hogg?"

"Locked him in the parlor, sir."

"Good! That will give me an opportunity to act."

"What are you going to do?"

"Disappear."

"Where to?"

"That's my business."

"What shall I do with the Hogg?"

"Release him in just fifteen minutes."

"Very good, sir."

Bings then went downstairs, and several of the boys came along, to whom Frank explained the situation.

"We ought to give Hogg a send-off," said Frank in conclusion.

"What for?" questioned one of the boys.

"To keep him away from here. If Bings has to go to court he will spit his spite out on us for causing it."

The others agreed with this conclusion.

"Let's lower him into the well and cut the bucket rope," suggested one.

"We'd have to lift him up again or he'd die," said Frank, shaking his head.

"Suppose we dig a hole in the road and bury him up to his neck?"

"That won't do any good, either."

"Couldn't we tie him in a rowboat and send him adrift on the Sound?"

"Which one would volunteer to get hung if he were drowned?" asked Frank.

"Not I," they all agreed.

"Then," said Frank, "we must do something that would not kill or maim him and yet so terrify him that he won't venture here again."

"Have you got any plan in view?"

"Yes. He knows that the boys in this academy are holy

terrors, and we must confirm his opinion so that he will take care to keep out of our way in future."

"How can we do it?"

"By making him run the gantlet. This hall is getting as dark as pitch. You see there are half a dozen doors opening onto it on either side. Let each fellow arm himself and take a doorway. As he comes along plug him."

This plan suited them, for the moment they let fly at the constable they could dodge into the rooms upon which the doors opened, lock the doors after them, and escape through the windows into the yard without being seen.

They armed themselves with brooms, ottomans, chair cushions and similar objects and then took up their positions.

Nearly half an hour had elapsed since Frank locked the constable into the parlor, and, feeling quite sure that Bings was well away from the academy, the boy approached the door, rapped upon it and shouted:

"Hey, Hogg, when you are ready to go you'll find the front door open."

He then quietly fled back to the doorway assigned to himself, and, crouching back, with a broom upraised, he waited.

For several minutes an intense silence ensued in the hall, not a sound indicating the presence of any one there.

Then suddenly a door banged.

Every one of the waiting boys started, and, getting a firmer grip on their weapons, they prepared for the scrimmage.

A moment afterward footsteps were heard approaching, and as Frank peeped around the casing, he saw the figure of a man coming swiftly toward the front entrance.

On came the figure until he reached Frank.

Biff!

"Oh!"

Bang!

"Ouch!"

Thump!

"Blame it!"

Whiz!

"Murder!"

Frank's broom had come around on his old kady and sent it to the ceiling. The next boy's foot-stool caught him in the jaw, sending him reeling; a baseball bat on the coat tails propelled him forward at a forty-knot pace, and a cushion slammed him against the wall.

Every time an object hit him he yelled.

He was pounded on the nose, back, shins and everywhere. He was knocked up on his head and slammed down on his heels, rolled over on his sides, fired against the walls and waltzed all over.

Every time a boy struck out the culprit disappeared behind

a door, and the yelling object got no rest until they were all gone.

Alarmed by the noise, Dinah came down the stairs holding a lamp up like the Statue of Liberty and showed the unfortunate sitting on the floor with the roof of his hat off, his coat ripped up the back, his collar and necktie in tatters and his face bunged out of shape.

The light revealed his features to the wench.

It was Mr. Holden!

CHAPTER X.

"Oh, good Lord! I'm all broke up!" groaned the little skinny under teacher as he picked himself up.

"Gosh a'mighty, Massa Holden, wha' struck yo'?" the fat wench asked, as she fixed her bulging eyes on him.

"I really do not know," wailed the unhappy Holden as he carefully felt to see if his body was entire. "It seemed to me as if a tornado had suddenly swept in through the back door, and, catching me in its embrace——"

Before he got any further the front door opened.

And in came Bings in the clutches of the constable.

"Mebbe them there young warmints o' you'n is werry cute," said the wily constable, "an' mebbe they isn't. Leastways I don't think as they is quite so sly as me, cause they had no sooner locked ther parlor door on me when I got out ther window an' hung aroun' in the yard a-waitin' for you to come out. He didn't pull the wool over my eyes quite so slick as he thunk, 'cause I knowed all the while he was tellin' me you was out that you wasn't. That's how I happened to catch you jist as you was sneakin' away with your carpetbag, perfessor."

"I wasn't sneaking away at all!" roared Bings. "I had a business engagement to attend to in New York, and——"

But just then he caught sight of Holden.

The sight almost knocked him silly.

"Great Lord!" he gurgled! "what is this?"

"In me you behold the unhappy victim of those boys, sir," meekly replied the bony little man.

"Archibaldas Holden—have you been drinking?"

"You know I never imbibe, sir."

"Have you suddenly become a raving lunatic?"

"I certainly feel like one. It was the boys who did it."

"Are you sure?"

"Not quite sure, but rather positive, Mr. Bings."

The professor was surer than Holden was.

He turned fiercely upon the constable.

"You get out of here!" he roared. "You have done your duty and are not wanted any longer."

Hogg slunk away and Dinah disappeared, fearing a blowing up.

Then Bings turned to Holden and demanded:

"Which one of the boys did this?"

"I do not know, sir," faltered the little man.

"Why don't you know?" roared the professor furiously.

"Because I didn't see them."

"Then I'll touch up the whole infernal school!" snarled Bings, who was savage over being caught by the constable.

He ordered Holden to go to his room, and then raved and stormed about the academy in an effort to discover the real culprits, but failed.

"Very well," he roared at the boys, whom he had assembled in the recitation room. "V-e-r-y well, young gentlemen. Since the real culprits won't materialize, you shall go to bed without your suppers, and to-morrow I'll touch you all up with my new rattan. We'll see how that will do."

This was more than Frank could stand. He couldn't stand seeing his innocent schoolmates punished for what he had been guilty of.

So he boldly stepped forward and said:

"If you please, Mr. Bings, don't tackle the whole gang."

"I'll do as I please—do you hear me? As I please!"

"Would you let them off if you knew who the real offender was?"

"Perhaps I might."

"Then I'll own up. It was I who caused the mischief."

"You? I thought so."

"Yes, I alone am to blame."

"Who were your companions?"

"That I refuse to tell."

"Ho! ho! You do, hey?"

"The job was done to help you, too."

"What do you mean by that?"

"We tackled old Holden by mistake."

"Thought he was me, I suppose?"

"No—the constable. We wanted to drive him away."

"Hum!" coughed Bings, his sternness relaxing. "That's different."

He fastened a hard, keen, penetrating look upon the boy and saw that he was prompted by a noble motive and told the truth.

As long as the job was done to protect him he could not thrash the boy very well, yet he did not wish to appear too generous.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" asked Frank.

"We will dismiss the matter for the present. I will reconsider it," gruffly replied Bings, much to every one's amazement.

The boys got their supper after all!

Moreover, none of them got touched up.

Every one voted Frank a plucky trump.

The professor's good heartedness did not last long, for the old undertaker got a judgment against him in court, and it so soured his disposition that before the week was over he had charged up twice the amount against the boys' parents, and he spent most of his time beating and starving them again.

He seemed to take an absolutely fiendish delight in devising and practicing all sorts of cruelties upon them.

It drove the fun-loving fellows to desperation and only made them act worse than they ever did before.

One night a council of war was held in the dormitory, and it was decided that if Bings continued practicing his cruelties that they would all run away from the academy.

Next day they assembled in the schoolroom for lessons and found Bings as cross as an old bear with a sore tail.

Frank kept his eye on the boys.

They were all devouring a lot of chestnuts they had gathered in the woods on the preceding day, and he followed their example.

Unluckily for him, the professor spotted him.

"Page!" he roared, banging his desk; "what are you eating?"

"Chestnuts," replied the boy.

"What!" yelled Bings, springing to his feet. "How dare you use such slang to me? Tell me what you are eating, I say."

"Oh, chestnuts!" reiterated the boy in disgusted tones.

"Confound your impudence. Didn't I tell you not to use slang?"

"Who's using slang?" asked the boy, seeing Bings' mistake and grinning.

"You are!"

"No, I ain't!"

"Come up here."

The boy obeyed reluctantly enough.

He no sooner had reached the professor when Bings seized him by the hair with both hands and nearly pulled it out by the roots.

"Let go!" roared the boy in agony.

"I'll break your neck for you!"

He gave the boy a kick, knocking him sprawling.

This brutality was too much for the rest.

Muggins sprang to his feet.

"Stop that, you brute!" he shouted.

In a moment more the whole crowd excitedly arose.

And the next instant one of them let a handful of chestnuts rip at the professor and caught him in the face.

This example started the rest.

Chestnuts by the hundreds flew from all directions at the professor, pelting him like bullets. They rattled on the walls and floor and the air was full of them.

Once started, the excited crowd did not stop, for as soon as their supply of nuts gave out, they let a shower of books, slates, ink bottles and stationery fly.

Bings saw that he had carried matters too far.

His grip was gone for good.

With a yell of agony he crouched against the wall, and, finding that he would get his head broken if he remained, he made a dash for the door.

After him rushed the shouting boys, headed by Frank, pelting the old villain at every step he took.

As he reached the hall Dinah admitted a gentleman who paused in amazement at the scene before him.

"Save me!" yelled Bings, rushing toward him.

"It's my father! He has got my letter at last!" cried Frank.

And so it was John Thomas Page.

Bings tripped over a rug and fell sprawling.

"Hold on there, boys!" shouted Mr. Page as the excited crowd rushed up to their fallen enemy. "What does this mean?"

"He nearly pulled Page's hair out of his head and kicked him in the stomach!" cried Muggins, excitedly. "We ain't going to stand his starvings and beatings any longer."

"No, no, no!" screamed the rest.

"Frank, can this be true?" demanded Mr. Page.

"Look at me, pop. Ain't I a wreck?"

"You are indeed."

"Did you get my letter?"

"Yes."

"Then I needn't say any more."

"He lies! The little scoundrel lies!" panted Bings, rising to his feet and shaking his fist at Frank.

"You muderous old hypocrite!" shouted Mr. Page. "I'll teach you to abuse my boy! I won't keep him in your confounded old rookery another hour. Take that, that and that!"

And the thashing he gave Bings made the boys howl with delight, for it was redress for the wrongs that they had suffered at the old rascal's hands, and it was all they expected to get.

The professor raved, threatened, swore and finally rushed away to escape further punishment.

Frank's father meant business now.

He plainly saw how the boys were abused, and as they all swore they would leave the academy, he advanced them the money to pay their fares home, perfectly confident that their parents would approve of his action.

That settled Touchemup Academy.

It was broken up and never revived, for Mr. Holden, Dinah and O'Hara secured situations elsewhere and Bings was left in possession of the old rookery alone.

Headed by Frank and his father, all the boys went down to the railroad depot and there left Glenwood forever.

Mr. Page brought his boy home, and it was not long afterward that he received letters of thanks from the fathers of all the rest of the scholars for what he did.

He resolved to give Frank employment in his business, instead of sending him to any other reformatory school.

In so doing he took a far wiser course than he had done before, as the boy sobered down quickly, and, although always fun-loving, he became a good business man.

And thus we must leave him.

THE END.

Read the next number (13) of "Snaps," which is entitled "MULDOON, THE SOLID MAN," by Tom Teaser.

LITTLE APRICOT;

OR,

SAVED IN TIME.

By A WELL UNKNOWN AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE SOLDERING OF TWO YOUNG HEARTS.

It was June.

Balmy June.

The polar bears warbled merrily in the foliage, and the soft, sweet shriek of the man who was selling hot potatoes upon the corner only tended to render the summery silence more audible.

Nature seemed in all her glory.

The fragrance of new-mown onions filled the air, and a gentle heifer (beg pardon, we mean zephyr), served to cool the icicles which hung in graceful festoons upon the broad second-story fire-escape which graced the front of her father's lordly mansion, upon which reclined Eva G. Smith.

She was just seventeen, and it would be hard to find a tougher-looking specimen of female beauty than she was.

Her long, silken tresses hung upon the back of the bed, and her complexion, always as clear as a mud-puddle after a rain-storm, was rendered additionally charming by an unexpected look which stretched from ear to ear of her oval face.

She leaned over the fire-escape.

Evidently she was waiting.

And watching?

Whom for?

Time will tell.

But we will tell before time does.

Up the alley came a manly form clad in an air of simple virtue, also a new suit of clothes (only seven dollars, damaged on account of fire).

He paused beneath the fire-escape.

Taking a pair of cymbals from his vest-pocket he beat them gently.

"Little Apricot!" he softly yelled.

Eva G. Smith heard the cry.

Well she knew from whose lips it issued.

"Ludovico!" she whispered.

"Yes."

"Is it you?"

"Every bit of me."

"Did you bring me my caramels?"

"I did."

"Chuck them up."

"Darling, I have already. To my cost, have I found that lager beer and caramels do not agree. Yet——"

"Fly!" suddenly interrupted Little Apricot. "My father

comes. If he sees you here he will cough at you and shatter your frame."

CHAPTER II.

SCORNEG GOLD.

A moment later Mr. Smith appeared.

He looked suspiciously away from his daughter.

"Eva?" said he.

"Yes, papa."

"What are you doing out here?"

"Blowing my nose," artlessly answered Little Apricot.

"Come with me."

"Where?"

"Eva?"

"Yes?"

"Let me confide to you a secret. I am a ruined man."

"Ruined?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"What money I have not invested in the Keely Motor, I have placed in the Marine Bank. Eva, I have but two resources."

As he spoke he grabbed her by the arm. Almost brutally he dragged her into a far-off room.

He pointed to a large package, almost a bale.

"See, girl," he cried; "there is a ton of Paris green! That is one alternative—suicide! The other is——"

"What, pa?"

"That you wed P. J. Maccaroon."

An icy shudder iced Little Apricot's burly frame.

"Anything but that, pa!" she shrieked. "You are aware that my affections are pledged to Ludovico Jones."

"And you are equally aware that my watch is pawned with Simpson," fiercely said her father. "Here comes Mr. Maccaroon now! Give him a favorable answer, or, girl, heed my words! Your curses will fall upon my head."

With these awful words he skipped the apartment.

CHAPTER III.

A HAPPY FINIS.

Little Apricot nearly swooned.

If she had not been all dressed up she would have, doubtless.

She didn't, though.

She kept herself in.

Presently P. J. Maccaroon entered.

His was not a form or face calculated to ensnare any young girl's affections.

He was hump-backed.

He was gimp-legged.

He didn't have any arms.

His teeth appeared like decayed grave stones, and his nose had been kicked in by a cow in late youth.

"Miss Smith?" said he.

"Sir?" she answered, in tones as cold as the breeze from off an iceberg.

"I have long admired you."

"Thanks."

"Will you—will you be my wife?"

Firm and clear, with the calmness of despair, came the frail girl's answer:

"Never!"

"What, never?"

"No, never!"

A howl of demoniac rage appeared upon Mr. P. J. Maccaroon's countenance.

"Girl, little you know that you are in my power!" he hissed. "I have a warrant upon your father's linen duster. Marry me not and I foreclose!"

The devilish malignity with which he spoke caused Little Apricot to chill with terror.

But help was at hand.

The door fell off of its hinges, and, lo! Ludovico entered.

Mr. P. J. Maccaron shrank back.

Haughtily Ludovico flung down a quarter.

"Villain," he said, "that pays all debts incurred by Mr. Smith. Flee!"

The villain fled.

He met with an awful fate.

He went to a dime museum and was eaten up by cannibals.

After his departure Little Apricot sank into her lover's arms.

"Saved!" she remarked.

"Yes, pet."

"But, Luddy?"

"What?"

"Are you sure that your soul is not crime-dyed?"

"What mean you?"

"Where did you get that quarter? Never did I see you have so much money before."

"Policy—I struck a gig," he cooed softly.

Reader, our tale is done, and we are glad of it.

Little Apricot and Ludovico are unhappily married. They keep a pie bakery and have eleven kids. As for old man Smith, he fell down a sewer and got eaten up by rats.

THE END.

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